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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 000540

SIPDIS

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TAGS: MOPS PREL AF CA ISAF

SUBJECT: CANADA SEARCHING FOR PARTNERS FOR ISAF IV AND V

REF: OTTAWA 435

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Brian Flora,  
Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Since Defense Minister McCallum's February 12 announcement that Canada would contribute a battalion and brigade headquarters to ISAF IV and V (reftel), the GoC has been busy seeking potential partners. The GoC has stressed that it does not have the resources to lead ISAF alone, and it hopes to get confirmation in the next few weeks that Germany will help lead ISAF IV. For ISAF V, Canada is looking at either Italy or Spain. McCallum has spoken with Italian Defense Minister Martino, and will be lobbying him again during a June visit to Ottawa. Canadian officials tell us that while Spain's Parliament had decided not to participate, during the Munich meetings German Defense Minister Struck got his Spanish counterpart Trillo to agree to take another look.

¶2. (C) Canada wants quickly to begin negotiations on a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. military on support for this mission, and is pushing for NATO support as well. McCallum has said NATO participation is needed to help ensure ISAF continuity. Meanwhile, there continue to be misgivings in the Canadian Forces about their ISAF contribution because of its size and duration. MGEN Cam Ross, Department of National Defense (DND) Director General for International Security Policy, resigned (effective in June) after the ISAF announcement to protest what he saw as an over-commitment of Canadian troops. Ironically, Ross is leading a DND team that is visiting Italy, Spain, and possibly Germany and NATO this week to discuss ISAF force structure. While Canada needs another major partner for ISAF IV and V, DND also wants to ensure that it has an appropriate tactical and leadership role.

¶3. (C) To complement Canada's military contribution to ISAF, Foreign Affairs (DFAIT) is pushing to open a diplomatic mission in Kabul. Cabinet has approved the concept of such a mission, but DFAIT is now in a battle with the Treasury Board over funding. DFAIT currently covers Afghanistan from its Embassy in Islamabad.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Critics of the GoC's ISAF commitment point to the fact that Canada was unable to replace a battalion that it pulled out of Afghanistan (where it was part of Operation Enduring Freedom) after a 6-month stint last year. While DND did better than expected in the GoC budget announced earlier this month - an increase of 7%, or \$530 million, plus \$215 million additional for contingency operations - a 12-month commitment to ISAF will be a major drain on the Canadian Forces. Canada will need all the help it can get from Allies and, ideally, from NATO itself.

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